



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLINTON, BISHOP ANNOUNCE FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE BACK ON PLUM ISLAND

Washington, DC - Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Congressman Tim Bishop today announced that they had received confirmation from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that agents from the Federal Protective Service (FPS) are once again present to safeguard the Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

Earlier this year, Clinton and Bishop wrote to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, asking him to reconsider the decision to remove FPS agents from the facility. Clinton and Bishop confirmed that, as of yesterday, an FPS officer will be assigned to protect Plum Island. Additionally, Clinton and Bishop said that DHS is working to establish a permanent FPS presence on the Island as soon as possible.

"This was the right decision for the Department of Homeland Security to make. While I still cannot understand their reasons for removing the Federal Protective Service from Plum Island, I am very pleased that they have reconsidered and reinstated their officers at the facility," said Senator Clinton. "Plum Island continues to serve a vital role in our nation's biodefense. Congressman Bishop and I will continue to work with DHS to ensure that we have the right level of security to enable the center to complete its mission while also protecting nearby communities."

"I am pleased that DHS is responding to our view that the safety of our community is too important to outsource the facility's security to private guards with less oversight and limited enforcement authority," said Congressman Bishop, who also held a May 23 meeting with DHS Undersecretary for Science and Technology Jay Cohen to push for a renewed FPS presence at Plum Island. "Establishing a round-the-clock federal security presence at Plum Island will improve coordination and it will make the facility safer. I applaud DHS and Director Barrett for taking this important step forward."

A copy of Senator Clinton and Congressman Bishop's February 21 letter to DHS on the FPS agents at Plum Island follows -

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our concerns about the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) oversight of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC). We are particularly concerned that DHS has not been meeting the security needs of the facility since Federal Protective Service (FPS) agents were removed from the island.

As you are aware, we have worked very closely with the DHS to improve and ensure the safety and security of Plum Island's facility and operations, and to protect the surrounding communities. We have also worked hard to establish an open line of communication regarding these issues. Accordingly, we request answers to the following questions:

1. If PIADC's current director continues to serve on an interim basis, when do you intend to appoint a permanent director?
2. How are the law enforcement operations previously assigned to FPS currently performed?
3. Which federal agency is responsible for overall security of the facility or which agency supervises the security if it is currently provided by a private entity?
4. Which agency coordinates the first response in the event of an accident or emergency?
5. How are the communications between PIADC and first responders coordinated?

As you are well aware, the important research conducted by the Plum Island facility requires careful oversight and security. The pathogens and diseases studied are crucial to the safety of our food supply, and also involve broader health and security risks to our region and the nation. Please contact us as soon as possible with answers to the above questions as well as any other information that will help us carry out our responsibilities and achieve our mutual goals of protecting and securing the Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

Sincerely,
Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate

Timothy H. Bishop
United States House of Representatives

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